

Nicholson (Jas. B.)

# EXPERIENCE TABLES

OF THE

Independent Order of Odd Fellows

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

## DUES AND BENEFITS.

SHOWING THE

Ratio of Sickness and the Law of Increase.

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It is hoped that the information thus laid before the Order will tend, in some measure at least, to overcome the almost incomprehensible opposition manifested by many intelligent members to financial reforms, and lead them to endeavor to correct the errors of the past, arising out of inexperience. Time has taken out of the region of speculation, and demonstrated certain facts: they are part and parcel of the great body of truth, and, as such, should be welcomed into our beneficiary system, for we are not merely building for a day, but for all time.

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Compiled from the Semi-Annual Reports of the

Working Lodges and the Journals of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

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BY JAMES B. NICHOLSON,

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## DUES AND BENEFITS.

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THE subject of Dues and Benefits is attracting the attention of the Order to an extent hitherto unknown, and in some jurisdictions committees have been appointed, information collected, discussions had, and legislation indicated, if not consummated, resulting very largely from the presentation of the experience of the Order, as gathered and collated in the Journals of the Order. Yet, in some directions, the subject seems to be studiously ignored; no attempts are made to call the attention of the brotherhood to the subject, nor to impress its vital importance upon the minds of the membership.

The reports, when printed, are too often received and filed away, without probably more than two or three members of the Lodge looking over them, and the majority do not know that the Grand Lodge has collected an invaluable mass of statistics during the past five years, the application of which to the financial system of each Lodge would place it upon an enduring basis, and give to each member the comforting assurance of the ability of the Lodge to help him during his natural life, when sick or in need.

That there is a lamentable want of information upon the subject is undeniable. Scarcely a discussion takes place in any Grand or Subordinate Lodge but what a large proportion of the participants show that they have never read, much less thought, anything about the subject, ignoring completely the published experience of the Order. They are governed entirely by a short-sighted selfishness, by a desire to pay very little into the treasury, and to get a great deal out when sick; and, unfortunately, these are the governing sentiments in a large majority of the Lodges. The present condition of the Lodge, with a few hundreds or thousands of dollars in the treasury, is appealed to as an unanswerable argument against those who point to the great and immutable law of increase of risk and liability with age. Upon this point Grand Representative Williamson, in his able report to the Grand Lodge, in 1853, remarked, that "Nothing is more deceptive to the casual observer than the operations of the first few years of an institution which insures for life, and whose members are mostly young.

"The current rates of mortality and sickness are low, and the premiums paid are above the value of the insurance at the present age of its members. The result is that funds accumulate, and they imagine that the institution is making money and is safe for all time to come. And so it would be if the contracts ended with each year, and no responsibility was assumed for the future. But the truth is, we have made a contract for life, and that contract must be fulfilled in old age as well as in youth. Time is rolling on; diseases are augmenting their power to annoy; the scythe of death swings in broader and deeper circles with every year of



advancement in age; and the time is coming, with steady pace and unwearyed tread, when the payments that are now more than adequate to meet the contracts that mature, will be found to be inadequate to the increased and increasing sickness and mortality. Then shall we find use for the funds that should have been saved in the day of youth and prosperity; and then will bankruptcy come unless these funds shall have been gathered and reserved for this purpose. Thus it is quite possible for an institution to present the superficial appearance of unusual prosperity, to have large and increasing funds at the same time that it is travelling the road to ruin with a movement as steady and infallible as that of the globe in its orbit."

A quarter of a century has passed since those words of wisdom were uttered. If they had been heeded then we would not, to-day, have Lodges paying a paltry pittance under the name of benefits, to evade the laws of the Order, but they would have been in a condition to have kept their faith to the sick members and fulfilled the original pledges, and if the brotherhood will but heed them now, an incalculable amount of bitter disappointment will be obviated, and an enduring amount of good be accomplished. Alas! there are but few that read, examine and reflect upon this subject, yet it is of paramount importance to the vitality and the honor of the working Lodges. The crudest ideas are the most popular and control the legislation to the detriment of the permanence and reliability of the Lodges. The advocate of a low rate of dues and a high rate of benefits is still the hero of the hour, and has the largest following, and unfortunately the delusion lasts until the brink of the precipice is reached and destruction cannot in too many cases be averted. It is argued that we cannot compete with new organizations which promise "bargains at very little expense," and that members "cannot afford" to pay dues sufficient to enable the Lodge to pay benefits to the sick, and that our contemporaries are inclined "to practical and material profits." To this it may be answered that we do not propose to risk the good name and high standing of the Order by competing with reckless promises that our experience proves to be deceptive, but to so regulate our financial affairs that every promise shall be sacredly kept. If members cannot afford to pay dues so as to pay benefits, they ought not to expect benefits when they get sick; and as "the payment of weekly benefits is the distinguishing characteristic of our Order," all connected therewith are expected to honestly labor for the carrying out of this special feature of the organization, and not seek to subvert its design. The idea of "material profits" in Odd-Fellowship is certainly novel. Its primary object is mutual relief, or, in other words, a sharing among the membership of the losses occasioned by sickness. It is not even designed that "profits" shall accrue to the sick brother through his sickness, but simply that some of his loss shall be made up to him. If there are those who have connected themselves with the Order under the idea of "practical and material profits," and they continue to cherish that idea, they stand in open antagonism to the cherished purposes and objects of the Order.

The payment of a stipulated sum weekly to a brother when sick, being one of the original fundamental characteristics of the Order, deserves all necessary attention that it may be successfully preserved and maintain its pre-eminence over all mere donation practices, which are without system, and depend upon spasmodic actions or the whims or caprices of those who for the time being have control of the funds. Odd Fellowship has ever pointed with just pride to its systemized beneficence, wherein the proper spirit, the self-respect, and the manhood of the recipient of its benefits have been preserved, and it is believed that with the now recognized and acknowledged defects in the application of the system, admitting that

abuses are sometimes perpetrated under it, that it is yet the best system that has ever been devised, and that nothing now known combines so much of system, or has as many unalloyed advantages as Odd Fellowship combines in its system of dues and benefits. The system as now recognized is the result of slow growth toward its perfect development; a just and equitable distribution of the burdens that sickness imposes upon individual members—upon the entire membership of a Lodge.

The principle upon which the system is based is correct, but the determination of the proper relationship between the dues and the benefits is the point at which the Lodges fail, in their legislation. What is needed is, that each Lodge shall place the system of mutual relief upon a sound financial basis that will stand the test of time.

The principle of self-government in the Lodges lies at the foundation of Odd Fellowship, and the system of dues and benefits has been established thereby, it is therefore self-evident that proper action in the Lodges depends upon the information and the intelligence of the membership in utilizing the information that has been and is now being acquired by the experience of the Order, and to give it a practical application in the regulations of the Lodges.

BRO. AMOS HENDERSON, M. W. Grand Master of Illinois, in his report made October, 1877, thus speaks:

#### “ DUES AND BENEFITS ”

“ This question is one of vital interest to the Order, and one which this Grand Lodge will soon be compelled to legislate upon. The older Lodges in the jurisdiction are about reaching their average mortality, and disclose the fact that our present system of dues and benefits are not based upon sound financial principles, and unless we soon adjust our dues and benefits to the laws of nature, as developed in the rate of sickness and mortality, the fiat of Omnipotence is no more certain than the fact that our institution must fall amid the reproaches and execrations of those who have trusted its promises and discovered too late that they had been leaning upon a broken reed. The laws of nature and the fixed principles of mathematical science will not bend to suit our convenience or save us from our errors. The present condition and future prosperity of our Order, and even its continued existence as a solvent institution, calls imperiously for a speedy, thorough and universal revision of our present system of dues and benefits.”

BRO. RICHARD J. JONES, Grand Master of North Carolina, in his report, remarks:

“ There is probably no question which affects the permanency of our Order so much (to be as little understood) as a proper basis upon which to estimate the ratio which the WEEKLY DUES should bear to the WEEKLY BENEFITS. That this question is not thoroughly understood may be accounted for from the fact that our members have never given the subject that full consideration which it demands, and without which it cannot be thoroughly understood.

“ As well might a life insurance company undertake to do a successful business without the aid of an actuary's table, or ever inquiring into the death rate of the human family, as for a society to undertake to pay a given amount of ‘ sick benefits ’ per week, for a given amount of weekly dues, without knowing the SICK RATE of the State or community in which it expects to operate.”



It may not be out of place to give a brief history of the subject of dues and benefits in our Order, in order to correct existing misapprehensions. Nothing could be more crude than the system was in its inception, and it is far from perfect at the present time. The first knowledge that we have of the system of relief in the Lodges in England, was the taking up of a collection when a member was reported in need of assistance; this had the effect to lessen the attendance at the meetings, as the absentees were not called upon to contribute, therefore a weekly contribution was called for from each member to be paid into a common fund, out of which pecuniary relief was afforded to those entitled. If there was anything remaining in the treasury at the end of the year a pro-rata division was had, and a new start was made. In the course of time the unavoidable result of this arrangement became apparent, the aged and the sickly were left out when the new year was entered upon, so that no man could tell when his turn would come to be deprived of all the advantages of membership. An effort was then made to create a permanent fund in each Lodge, with a continuous existence of the Lodge and its membership, but there was the most profound ignorance as to what the relative proportion ought to be, between what the members should vote to pay into the funds of the Lodge, and what the Lodge should pay the members when sick. In this condition of affairs the Order was introduced into this country, and Thomas Wildey could no more have decided what the proper relation between the dues and the benefits in a Lodge ought to be, in order for the Lodge to fulfill its obligations and maintain its existence for a century, than he could have solved some of the astronomical problems of the age. The system was founded in this country upon mere guesswork, haphazard and chance, but let no one blame Wildey for this, for there was no man living who could have given a scientific basis in the absence of statistics of the sick ratio. When Pennsylvania Lodge, No. 1, was instituted, it started out on the same problematical career; Lodge after Lodge copied the By-Laws of No. 1, knowing no more upon the subject than that existing Lodges had adopted the same rates of dues and benefits, never inquiring what the basis was, upon which the proportion had been established.

In 1854 and 1855 a vigorous effort was made to collect statistics upon the subject by the Grand Lodge of the United States; a large mass of information was collected, and an able report was presented to the Grand Lodge by Brother I. D. Williamson, which unfortunately failed to attract the attention that its importance deserved. If his suggestions had been adopted the Order would years ago have been in the possession of a body of statistics in relation to sickness that would have been invaluable to the Order, and formed the basis of an accurate adjustment of dues and benefits.

The Friendly Societies in Great Britain, among which the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (Manchester Unity) is the leading organization, stimulated by acts of Parliament, undertook some years ago the collection of statistics, which were placed in the hands of the Board of Actuaries, who framed a series of tables to which all the Friendly Societies are compelled to conform. The dues vary, or rather increase, with age, differing entirely in this respect from our system, but there are some results set forth in those tables that arrest attention; an abstract of one is here given:

Table from calculations of rates of dues, confirmed by twenty-five years' positive experience, showing the lowest rate that can safely secure till seventy years of age *five dollars per week* during sickness:

Age at initiation in periods of five years.	Dues annually.	Dues weekly.	When rates vary in periods of ten years.	Dues yearly.	Dues weekly.
21 and 25	\$8 14	\$0 15 }	Between 21 and 30	\$8 75	\$0 17
25 " 30	9 37	18 }			
30 " 35	10 79	21 }	Between 30 and 40	11 72	22
35 " 40	12 66	24 }			
40 " 45	15 12	29 }	Between 40 and 50	16 74	32
45 " 50	18 36	35 }			
50 " 55	22 62	43 }	Between 50 and 60	25 57	49
55 " 60	28 52	54 }			
			Between 21 and 40	10 23	20
			Between 40 and 60	21 15	41
			Between 21 and 60	15 87½	30½

Applying our system to the English rate it would require the payment of thirty and a-half cents per week on the part of each member to entitle to the payment of five dollars per week when sick; an amount far beyond what the membership in this country are called upon to pay. One great advantage to the Order in ascertaining the proper rate would be the concentration of interest in a Lodge, and an immense saving to the members, who frequently contribute to the management and working expenses of three or four organizations in order to be entitled to draw a sum adequate to keep themselves from want when sick, when it might all be done by one Lodge. If the experience of the Order shows that a Lodge can safely pledge itself to the payment of five dollars benefits for fifteen cents weekly dues, then the Lodge could agree to pay ten dollars benefits for twenty-five cents dues, and fifteen dollars benefits for thirty-five cents dues. Having paid their share of the expenses in the first payment there would be no necessity of repeating it; they would thus save a share of the maintenance of two other organizations, as well as the admission fees. Their interest being thus consolidated, their attendance at the meetings would naturally be more frequent, and the benign teachings of the Order would have a wider field of action.

When the idea of calling upon the Lodges to give the "number of weeks for which benefits were paid" was first broached, it was thought to be too simple to be practically useful, that something further was needed, more in detail, and elaborating the matter more fully; but the experience of five years shows that what has been asked for is not beyond the capacity of the most ordinary Secretary to furnish, and that the number of weeks' benefits paid is the key that opens the whole subject of dues and benefits to the most casual inquirer. Nothing but ignorance and short-sighted selfishness now stand in the way of a great reform, that will place every Lodge upon an enduring and perfectly solvent basis, if but ordinary business precautions are observed in relation to the security of the investments. A Lodge that has been in existence for some years, can go back, year after year, and ascertain what has been paid in each year for benefits, the law of progressive increase, as set forth in the experience tables of the Order, will inevitably appear. The ratio of increase can be applied to the future, and the Lodge can thus tell what the probable demands will be upon it in ten, twenty or thirty years hence,



and make provision in due season to meet the demands that time will inevitably bring in its train.

At the Annual Session of the Grand Lodge in May, 1874, the following was presented :

“The semi-annual reports now call for information as to the number of weeks' benefits paid to sick members. Reports embracing a period of six months only have been received, yet the subject is so important, and lies so near the foundation stones of the prosperity of the Lodges, that it has been thought proper to present the information that has been obtained, in order that Lodges may have it before them when considering how much dues should be paid into the treasury of a Lodge, in order to enable it to pay a certain amount of benefits, and thus give the Lodge the ability to fulfil its engagements to its members. The returns show that there have been 27,475 weeks' sickness in six months in a membership of 88,270, making a ratio of 54,950 weeks' sickness per annum.

The following table shows the number of weeks' sickness in every one hundred members, calculated on the average of every fifty Lodges, beginning at No. 1, and ending with No. 847 :

Lodges.	Number of Mem- bers.	Number of weeks' sickness in six months.	Number of weeks' sickness in one year.	Rate per cent of weeks' sickness.	Average per cent of sick- ness in every hundred Lodges.	
1 to 51	9585	4713	9426	98.33	87.65	
51 to 101	8906	3427	6854	76.97		
101 to 151	7490	2627	5254	70.68	64.85	
151 to 201	6521	1892	3784	58.02		
201 to 251	6458	2037	4074	63.08	64.01	
251 to 301	5549	1802	3604	64.94		
301 to 351	5772	1767	3534	61.05	62.32	
351 to 401	5556	1767	3534	63.60		
401 to 451	4525	1453	2906	64.22	60.58	
451 to 501	4401	1253	2506	56.94		
501 to 551	4719	1305	2610	55.30	53.04	
551 to 601	4210	1069	2138	50.78		
601 to 651	3390	509	1018	30.03	30-35	
651 to 701	3299	506	1012	30.67		
701 to 751	3716	627	1254	33.74	36.31	
751 to 801	3076	598	1196	38.88		
801 to 847	1097	123	246	22.42	22.42	
	88,270	27,475	54,950		62.25	General Average.

The classification of Lodges into fifties, enables the examiner to trace the differences between the senior and the junior Lodges in the proportion of, or liability to sickness. In the first fifty Lodges, it will be perceived that the average sickness is nearly one week per annum for each member, whilst in the Lodges above No. 700, the ratio is a little over one-third of a week. The mean average being sixty-two and twenty-five one-hundredths. In the general table there are fluctuations.

## ANNUAL SESSION, 1875.

The returns show that in a reported membership of 94,401, there have been 59,392 weeks of sickness for which benefits have been paid, being an average of 62 91-100 weeks' sickness per annum for every one hundred members; or to state it in another manner: If the sickness had been distributed pro rata among the membership, every member would have been sick four days, nine hours and forty-two minutes during the year.

In order that the Lodges may see to what they are tending as years pass by, the following table is submitted, in which the Lodges are divided into fifties and into hundreds. It is a glass into which the young Lodges may look and behold themselves as age steals upon them, and they should make provision in due season for the future:

Lodges numbering from	Number of Members in each 50 Lodges.	Number of weeks' sickness in each 50 Lodges.	Average weeks' sickness in 50 Lodges, and each 100 Members.	Average weeks' sick- ness in each 100 Lodges, for every 100 Members.
1 to 51	9,474	9,303	98.20 }	88.78
51 to 101	9,096	7,219	79.36 }	
101 to 151	7,601	6,023	79.24 }	71.17
151 to 201	6,764	4,269	63.11 }	
201 to 251	6,612	4,342	65.67 }	67.86
251 to 301	5,669	3,972	70.06 }	
301 to 351	5,804	3,779	65.11 }	64.92
351 to 401	5,328	3,449	64.73 }	
401 to 451	4,456	2,444	54.84 }	59.79
451 to 501	4,486	2,905	64.75 }	
501 to 551	4,697	2,600	55.35 }	56.02
551 to 601	4,911	2,784	56.69 }	
601 to 651	3,848	1,157	30.09 }	35.91
651 to 701	4,744	1,980	41.74 }	
701 to 751	4,138	1,575	38.06 }	33.84
751 to 801	3,740	1,108	29.62 }	
801 to 851	3,033	483	15.92 }	
	94,401	59,392		

General average, 62 91-100 weeks' sickness among every 100 members.

## ANNUAL SESSION, 1876.

The semi-annual reports of the subordinate Lodges, in relation to the number of weeks' sickness, have been carefully collated, and it will be found that there is a general increase of averages, particularly noticeable in the oldest Lodges. Whilst a large percentage of the increase is owing to the want of regular employment, causing a depressed mental condition, and increased susceptibility to sickness on the part of the membership, yet it is but the indication of an unerring law that the demands upon the treasury of a Lodge increase with its age—the average age of the members mounting upward steadily year by year.

Lodges numbering from	Number of Members in each 50 Lodges.	Number of weeks' sickness in each 50 Lodges.	Average weeks' sickness in 50 Lodges, for every 100 Members.	Average weeks' sickness in 100 Lodges, for every 100 Members.
1 to 51	9,045	9,717	107.43 }	95.82
51 to 101	9,012	7,585	84.17 }	
101 to 151	7,604	6,742	88.67 }	81.50
151 to 201	6,689	4,970	74.34 }	
201 to 251	6,418	4,770	71.21 }	74.84
251 to 301	5,434	4,264	78.47 }	
301 to 351	5,555	3,872	69.70 }	64.78
351 to 401	5,413	3,240	59.86 }	
401 to 451	4,319	2,610	60.43 }	65.15
451 to 501	4,458	3,117	69.92 }	
501 to 551	4,717	2,596	55.03 }	55.35
551 to 601	4,583	2,552	55.68 }	
601 to 651	3,608	1,297	35.95 }	40.44
651 to 701	4,478	1,973	44.06 }	
701 to 751	3,960	1,425	36.65 }	38.76
751 to 801	3,425	1,405	41.02 }	
801 to 851	3,110	1,006	32.35 }	24.19
851 to 901	2,732	438	16.03 }	
	94,580	63,579		
901 to 907	312*			
	94,802			

\* New and paid no sick benefits.

General average, Lodges No. 1 to 901 = 67 22-100 weeks' sickness in every 100 members during the fiscal year.



## ANNUAL SESSION, 1877.

Lodges numbering from	First Term.	Second Term.	Total weeks' sickness.	Number of Members.	Weeks' sickness each 50 Lodges, every 100 Members.	Weeks' sickness every 100 Lodges, every 100 Members.
1 to 50	5370	5218	10588	8714	121.51	105.44
51 to 100	3846	3995	7841	8772	89.39	
101 to 150	3274	3492	6766	7264	93.14	83.81
151 to 200	2354	2414	4768	6403	74.47	
201 to 250	2372	2429	4801	6125	78.38	83.64
251 to 300	2262	2309	4571	5141	88.91	
301 to 350	2268	1915	4183	5279	79.24	72.77
351 to 400	1806	1648	3454	5209	66.31	
401 to 450	1314	1305	2619	4138	63.29	66.10
451 to 500	1458	1550	3008	4364	68.90	
501 to 550	1231	1361	2592	4426	58.56	53.30
551 to 600	1318	1134	2452	4225	58.04	
601 to 650	600	428	1028	3192	32.21	38.77
651 to 700	976	930	1906	4224	45.36	
701 to 750	936	682	1618	3677	44.00	42.38
751 to 800	617	630	1247	3060	40.75	
801 to 850	323	611	934	2969	31.46	29.01
851 to 900	302	489	791	2081	26.55	
901 to 948	*			1575		

\* Not beneficial.

General average per one hundred members, 64.47-100.

General average of sickness in 1873,	.	.	62.25
" " " 1874,	.	.	62.91
" " " 1875,	.	.	67.22
" " " 1876,	.	.	64.47

Showing that the general average of sickness among the members of the Order, drawing benefits for the past four years, was 64.21 weeks to every one hundred members; or, in other words, if the sickness had been equally divided among the membership, each member would have been sick four days, eleven hours and thirty-six minutes each year.

## ANNUAL SESSION, 1878.

The semi-annual reports in relation to the number of weeks' sickness have been again carefully collated, and the results are herewith presented. The number of weeks' sickness, of members in good standing, amounted during the past year to 66,065. The general average of sickness among the members of the Order drawing benefits, being 77.39-100 weeks for every one hundred members. To state the matter in a different form, if the sickness had been distributed among the membership, each member would have been sick five days, ten hours and one minute, being an

increase over the preceding year of twenty-two hours and twenty-five minutes' sickness per member.

Lodges numbering from	First Term.	Second Term.	Total weeks' sickness.	Number of Members.	Weeks' sickness each 50 Lodges, every 100 Members.	Weeks' sickness every 100 Lodges, each 100 Members.
1 to 50	5208	5062	10270	8265	124.26	111.61
51 to 100	4193	4028	8221	8303	99.01	
101 to 150	3679	3572	7251	6963	104.14	96.83
151 to 200	2731	2397	5128	5821	88.09	
201 to 250	2432	2480	4912	5743	85.53	89.06
251 to 300	2365	2105	4470	4791	93.30	
301 to 350	2184	1845	4029	4776	84.36	75.84
351 to 400	1583	1619	3202	4758	67.30	
401 to 450	1348	1087	2435	3811	63.89	70.33
451 to 500	1493	1601	3094	4050	76.40	
501 to 550	1292	1251	2543	3995	63.65	66.67
551 to 600	1332	1327	2659	3808	69.83	
601 to 650	537	461	998	2869	34.79	45.43
651 to 700	1188	832	2020	3774	53.52	
701 to 750	667	598	1265	3098	40.83	41.68
751 to 800	575	553	1128	2643	42.68	
801 to 850	519	509	1028	2688	38.24	37.90
851 to 900	593	474	1067	2840	37.57	
901 to 950	153	192	345	2365	14.59	

General average, Lodges No. 1 to 950 = 77 39-100.

General average of sickness in 1873,	.	.	62.25
" " " 1874,	.	.	62.91
" " " 1875,	.	.	67.23
" " " 1876,	.	.	64.47
" " " 1877,	.	.	77.39

The average sickness in the first fifty Lodges for the past five years, was as follows :

In 1873,	.	.	.	.	98.33 weeks for each 100 members.
In 1874,	.	.	.	.	98.20 " " "
In 1875,	.	.	.	.	107.43 " " "
In 1876,	.	.	.	.	121.51 " " "
In 1877,	.	.	.	.	124.26 " " "

The average sickness in the first hundred Lodges for the past five years, was as follows :

In 1873,	.	.	.	.	87.65 weeks for each 100 members.
In 1874,	.	.	.	.	88.78 " " "
In 1875,	.	.	.	.	95.82 " " "
In 1876,	.	.	.	.	105.44 " " "
In 1877,	.	.	.	.	111.61 " " "

That this law of increase is not confined to the oldest Lodges, but that it governs the demand in all Lodges, or will do so, is apparent from the following exhibit :

The average sickness in the Lodges numbering from 501 to 601 (instituted between February 20th, 1854, and May 13th, 1867), was as follows :

In 1873,	. . . . .	53.04	weeks' sickness per 100 members.				
In 1874,	. . . . .	56.02	"	"	"	"	"
In 1875,	. . . . .	55.35	"	"	"	"	"
In 1876,	. . . . .	58.30	"	"	"	"	"
In 1877,	. . . . .	66.67	"	"	"	"	"

The average sickness in the Lodges numbering 701 to 801 (instituted between January 28th, 1869, and May 24th, 1872), was as follows :

In 1873,	. . . . .	36.31	weeks' sickness' per 100 members.				
In 1874,	. . . . .	33.84	"	"	"	"	"
In 1875,	. . . . .	38.76	"	"	"	"	"
In 1876,	. . . . .	42.38	"	"	"	"	"
In 1877,	. . . . .	41.68	"	"	"	"	"

Thus, step by step, does the average mount up, year after year, as the Lodges grow older, yet the lesson that the above teaches will, it is feared, not be heeded, and the members will continue to go on, in despite of all prudential considerations, closing their eyes to the future, and not making provision for the inevitable demands of age until it is too late to make the attempt. Bitter will be the disappointment, and crushed the hopes of many now sanguine and inconsiderate, who will not pause to reflect upon what the experience of the Order demonstrates.

It will be seen that after making due allowance for the causes that produce fluctuations, that the existence of a law that regulates the demand for sick benefits is as clear as any mathematical demonstration can be made. In the Lodges numbering from 1 to 100, the increase in five years was twenty-four weeks for each one hundred members.

In the Lodges numbering from 501 to 601, the increase during the same period of time was thirteen weeks, whilst in the Lodges numbering from 701 to 801, the increase was five weeks. Thus showing that the ratio of increase in five years was greatest in the oldest Lodges, and least in the younger Lodges. Nothing can be clearer than the fact thus demonstrated by the experience or the Order, that in every Lodge there will be an increased demand for benefits in the future as the Lodges grow older, and that the ratio of increase will change and be enlarged with each decade of years, until the maximum demand is reached, to meet which a large reserve fund will be needed, or extraordinary contributions must then be required from the members to pay sick benefits, or there will a defunct Lodge, with aged members thrown upon the cold charity of the world. Will brethren, who have a controlling influence in their Lodges, read and be wise in season? Is the spontaneous inquiry, as this great underlying law of constantly increasing average is making itself known and felt. Every true Odd Fellow should feel that there is a great work to be done in educating the Order up to recognition of its fundamental duties, for it is unfortunately too true that so long as men can evade the duties and derive all the benefits of an organization, there are many who will do so.

THE FIRST DUTY OF A LODGE SHOULD BE TO SEE THAT THE BENEFITS RECEIVED BY ITS MEMBERS ARE IN PROPORTION TO THE DUTIES THEY PERFORM TO THE LODGE. If the Lodge promises more than the members give it the capacity to perform the result must be sooner or later ruinous to the Lodge.

The aggregate cost of the expenses for rent, light, fuel, stationery, advertising, regalia, per capita tax, &c., for the Lodges in 1875, when reduced to each individual member, was \$2.15 for the year, or  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cents per week for each member of the Order in the jurisdiction. This data affords a basis, upon which, by adding the probabilities of sickness or



cost of relief, calculations may be made as to what amount of dues the members ought to pay into the treasury of a Lodge in order to insure the payment of a certain amount of benefits to the sick.

There are some who will be startled at this exhibition of the working cost of the organization, but a comparison with the expenses of many Insurance Companies will result greatly to the advantage of the Order, and when it is remembered that there are nine hundred rooms in Pennsylvania, all of them neat and comfortable, many of them spacious and elegant, that are thrown open weekly as places of meeting and resort for the membership, for social, moral, and intellectual culture, the surprise is rather that so many opportunities, enjoyments, and advantages can be secured for such a small weekly pittance.

In looking at the sick rate, it should be borne in mind that our Order is not only a beneficial, but it is a charitable organization. Our laws declare that "subordinate Lodges are instituted for the encouragement and support of brothers of the Order when in sickness, distress, or on travel, and for the purposes of benevolence and charity;" and again, "A wise and prudent dispensation of donations is an integral portion of the objects of the Order." That this is the case is shown by the records of the Order. The amount donated last year, and during the whole existence of the Order, to widowed families, was based upon no legal right, but simply upon the charitable dispositions of the members, influenced by the teachings of the Order. When the contributions made by the Lodges to the sufferers of New Orleans, Mississippi, Tennessee, Chicago, Michigan, Somerset, Memphis, Norfolk, and Ireland are considered, in connection with the almost nightly contribution of the Lodges to individual objects of charity, for an individual to declare that our Order is not a charitable society is merely to display his ignorance of the history and merits of one of the greatest charities of the age; and, on the other hand, in fixing the dues, a large percentage must be added to the sick rate and expenses, in order that there may be the means on hand to follow the dictates of charity.

Considering the cost of management and relief together, with the fact that in almost every Lodge there are weeks of sickness for which no benefits are claimed or paid, but for which the Lodge is liable if the claim be made in due season, therefore it is not safe to assume less than one week's sickness for each member, and applying the information thus gathered, it may be stated as a general proposition that A LODGE, WITH AN AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP AS TO NUMBERS, AGE, AND HEALTHFUL PURSUITS, CANNOT PAY FIVE DOLLARS PER WEEK TO THE MEMBERS WHEN SICK FOR LESS THAN FIFTEEN CENTS PER WEEK FOR DUES. TO PAY \$4 PER WEEK, THE DUES SHOULD BE 12 CENTS PER WEEK, AND NO LODGE CAN AFFORD TO PAY MORE THAN \$3 PER WEEK UPON 10 CENTS WEEKLY DUES.

If the members are engaged in hazardous or unhealthy occupations, or if there are many aged brothers among the members, or those whose diseases will make them claimants for many years, unless the Lodge has a large invested fund, the interest of which is added to the receipts from dues, an increase of weekly dues will be required, or a reduction of the benefits, to enable the Lodge to fulfil the contract made in the By-Laws to its members. All the circumstances that modify the sick rate, or that are connected with the working expenses of the Lodge, should be considered, and the calculations made accordingly.

THE FUNERAL BENEFITS SHOULD BE PAID OUT OF ASSESSMENTS MADE UPON THE MEMBERS,\* OR BY ADDING THE ACTUAL COST OF INSURANCE TO THE WEEKLY DUES.

The doing away with funeral assessments, and covering the payment of funeral benefits by the weekly dues, whilst it has been a convenience

to the Secretaries and to the members, has in many cases materially depleted the treasuries, and weakened the resources of the Lodges. Members are willing enough to do away with the funeral assessments, but in too many cases not willing to pay the additional amount of weekly dues requisite to cover the losses as they occur. The promise to pay a certain amount upon the death of a member, is simply an insurance upon his life.

The cost of Insuring an individual at the age of thirty-three years for \$100 in a sound Insurance Company is \$2.50 per annum. If we deduct 40 per cent. for the loading of the policy and the profit of the Insurance Company, and say that Lodges can insure for that much less, then the actual cost of insuring for \$100 would be \$1.50 per annum, or three cents per week, and the same ratio will apply to any lesser amount of funeral benefits.

Then there is the curious anomaly of funeral benefits for the wife of a member, for which nothing is paid in some Lodges, but for which the Lodge should be reimbursed by an assessment or an addition to the dues.

The increasing adoption of By-Laws reducing benefits after a certain period of sickness, whilst no doubt in some cases an expedient to meet a special case by a general law, is in others a necessity arising out of an impoverished treasury, a direct acknowledgement of the fact that the weekly dues have been too small to meet the claims which time has brought upon the Lodge.

There have been cases in years past where Lodges, having a fair reserve fund on hand, have thought that it was larger than necessary, and have been persuaded by certain unscrupulous members to divide the fund. Apart from the dishonesty of appropriating a trust fund that belonged not to the well and hearty, but that should have been kept sacred for the sick and distressed, the folly of such conduct becomes apparent; in the light of experience, every dollar thus abstracted will be needed in carrying out the legitimate office work of the Lodge, in visiting the sick, and in relieving the distressed. No Lodge, however large its funds may be, has a dollar that will not eventually be called for in fulfillment of the contract made with the individual members. In many Lodges the amount paid in by members who have eventually been suspended for non-payment of dues, is equal to the entire reserve fund—the capital of the Lodge—out of which the present membership is to be assisted.

The heavy demand for benefits has compelled many Lodges to reduce the amount of the weekly allowance to sick members. This action has, in most instances, been unavoidable, and is the natural result of a want of forethought and prudence, which it is one of the objects of establishing a wise and scientific relationship between dues and benefits to obviate in the future, so that the amount of benefits awarded shall be a substantial and reliable aid in times of sickness and distress. It was never designed that the beneficial system of the Order should furnish a support as complete and as ample as the income of the member when in health; to endeavor to make it so would be too great a temptation for slothful but designing men, a few of whom would exhaust the funds of a Lodge, and leave the worthy, industrious but unfortunate members, nothing to rely upon in their hours of sickness and disability. Benefits are designed to be an aid, a help, an assistance, when a member cannot follow his usual vocation. "The payment of weekly benefits to sick members is the distinguishing characteristic of our Order, and may be regarded as the fundamental principle of Odd Fellowship, which, combined with the moral precepts and teachings of the Order, has made our organization so eminently successful." It has, therefore, been authoritatively declared, that "it is the right and duty of subordinates to tax their members, that they may be enabled to grant stipulated weekly benefits to sick members."



It follows, therefore, that Lodges who bear the name of the Order should illustrate its "distinguishing characteristic," and perform the "duty" which their office work requires. The promised payment of a paltry pittance that is of no benefit to the sick, is simply an evasion of duty, and a disregard of "the fundamental principle of Odd Fellowship." To send forth a brother with a card, recommending him to the "friendship and protection" of sister Lodges, and declaring that the laws of the Lodge allows ten cents per week for benefits when the brother is sick, is an unsubstantial, hollow mockery, that brings sorrow and reproach as its results, and throws the entire burden of relief upon others. No Lodge in this jurisdiction has reduced the benefits to the paltry pittance named, but it behooves those Lodges that have been compelled to reduce to the lowest rate permitted in this jurisdiction, to strive, to create a financial condition by economy and prudence, and a proper regulation upon the all important subject of dues and benefits, that will make the latter a help in times of sickness, and give every member the comforting assurance that if the waves of trouble should roll over him, that his Lodge has not only the will, but the means to render him aid; that let him live as long as he may, his Lodge will outlast him, and always have the ability to help when aid is needed. This is the aim and the object of presenting the subject of the experience of the Order in relation to the necessity and the advantages of establishing a scale of dues and benefits that will cause no disappointments, but that will be a substantial good, and be as enduring as the "moral precepts" of Odd Fellowship.

Speaking of a Lodge that became defunct in 1877, the Grand Secretary after alluding to the efforts that had been made to keep it alive remarked:

Experience, argument and entreaty were alike thrown away upon the members, they adhered blindly to their own ideas, and rejected all advice, they thought, as perhaps others now think, that the Lodge would last their time; yet, sad to relate, a few days after the charter was surrendered, one of the old members died in the eighty-second year of his age. His Lodge was bankrupt, and he died poor, with not money enough left to give him decent burial. Sister Lodges had to be appealed to in order to procure means for his interment. It is difficult to imagine a more painful ending than this, of a long connection with a Lodge, and the failure of cherished hopes. Two prominent reasons may safely be assigned for the downfall of the Lodge. In the first place, for a long series of years no encouragement was given to young men to join and remain in the Lodge. If a young man did unite with them, their peculiarities soon made him feel uncomfortable, and he would withdraw and unite with some of the enterprising Lodges that were springing up around the now defunct Lodge. And again, the members persisted in a low rate of dues and a high rate of benefits, with no reserve fund to fall back upon. The effect was, therefore, a Lodge of aged men, an empty treasury, and final bankruptcy. This Lodge being dead, yet speaketh. Would that its voice of warning could be heard in every Lodge-room in Pennsylvania, saying, invite young men to unite with you; take them by the hand, encourage them in the active, practical duties of the Order; and fix your dues and benefits at such rates that you will lay up a reserve fund sufficient to meet all the claims that old age and infirmity will bring; then go on in the inculcation of the cardinal teachings of Odd Fellowship, and carry out its mission of peace and good will to man. It is hoped that sufficient facts, and rational deductions therefrom, have been presented in this report to engage the attention and lead to a study of the subject until so many of the brethren have mastered it, that the proper, just and equitable relation will be established in all the Lodges and Encampments of the Order.